



How to Effectively Appeal Your Property Tax Assessment

from State Senator
Tonya Schuitmaker

Dear Property Owner:

Do you think your property tax assessment is incorrect? If so, you may appeal the assessment.

First, a few reminders may be helpful. The term "taxable value" was introduced in 1995. It is the value used to calculate your property taxes. Annual growth in taxable value is capped at the rate of inflation, or 5 percent, whichever is less. The State Equalized Valuation (SEV) must still reflect 50 percent of the property's true cash value and may increase by more than the rate of inflation or 5 percent in any particular tax year. It is important to remember that your property taxes are no longer based on the SEV.

If, despite this information, you believe your assessment is in error, you may appeal to your local Board of Review and, if necessary, the Michigan Tax Tribunal. I have included the names and telephone numbers of assessors in the 20th District for your convenience.

The appeals process costs you nothing except time. The attached step-by-step guide, along with your willingness to explore all the possibilities, may help you obtain a favorable adjustment.

Sincerely,

Tonya Schuitmaker
State Senator
20th District

1-866-305-2120

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How to Effectively Appeal Your Property Tax Assessment

STEP 1 You may appeal your taxable value and SEV to the March Board of Review in 2011. Go to your local assessor's office and obtain a copy of your appraisal card for your property or visit their website for your assessment information. Ask the assessing department to explain the document. You can also obtain the appraisals of similar properties which recently sold in the area. Carefully check the appraisal card for errors.

STEP 2 If your tentative taxable value increased by more than 1.7% above your 2010 taxable value and you did not improve your home with additions, then your taxable value may exceed the statutorily mandated assessment cap. Call your assessor and inquire as to why your taxable value increased by more than the rate of inflation.

Remember, annual growth in taxable value is capped at the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is less, until the property transfers. SEV is not capped but must reflect 50% of your property's true cash value. Taxable value and SEV may be appealed to the Board of Review.

STEP 3 Frequently, many homes have problems that are not associated with general aging. Examples can be cracked foundations, wall construction problems, or poor masonry work. The impact of these problems on the value of the home should be specifically addressed. It is necessary to perform a complete inside inspection of your home. Written repair estimates and photographs of structural damage are good evidence of problems that could affect property value.

STEP 4 Location is the single most important feature that determines the value of your home. If you live near a major highway, business, or industry, your home may be less desirable.

Obtain copies of citizen complaints about unusual noises or neighborhood eyesores. Record factory, truck, or party noise. These characteristics may

contribute to a deteriorating value on your home and you must be able to show this to the Board of Review.

STEP 5 Comparable property assessments are one of the most important tools for a property tax assessment appeal. If comparable properties are assessed lower than yours, you may argue that your property is overassessed. Make your comparable study by requesting the appraisal cards for similar homes. Check the assessed value, the state equalized value, taxable value, type of house, and zoning.

You may wish to have your home professionally appraised. A professional appraisal is the best evidence against an improper assessment and the best proof of value.

STEP 6 One of the most common mistakes home buyers can make is failing to inform the assessor of personal property and other valuable items which were included in the sale. Personal property items often included in a home's sale price such as furniture, kitchen appliances, washer, dryer, etc., are exempt from assessment. If you do not inform your assessor in writing about these items, your assessment may erroneously include this value.

STEP 7 The last step in the process is to put all your information into letter form to present before your local Board of Review. An example is on the following page.

STEP 8 If you are not satisfied with the decision of your local Board of Review, you may want to continue your appeal. To do this, you must send a letter to the Michigan Tax Tribunal (P.O. Box 30232, Lansing, MI 48909) and file an appeal before July 31.

You must appeal to the local Board of Review before you can appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

SAMPLE APPEAL LETTER

Date _____

Name, Address, Telephone _____

To the Board of Review/Tax Tribunal:

I wish to appeal the assessed value of my property for the following reasons:

1. According to my Worksheet/Property Record, I have noted the following discrepancies:

A. I do not have a fireplace as indicated.

Estimated value\$3,000

B. I do not have a tile bath as indicated.

Estimated value\$2,000

C. According to my worksheet, I have 1,500 square feet of living space. I have 1,000 square feet.

Reduced value.....\$11,535

This amount should be deducted from true cash value\$16,535

2. I have noted the following structural defects on my property. They reduce the value of the property by the following amounts:

A. Cracked foundation\$6,335

B. Cracked exterior wall\$3,665

This amount should be deducted from true cash value\$10,000

3. I live in an area that has mixed zoning and next door there is a new junkyard which emits loud noises and noxious odors. This affects the value of my property.

I feel my true cash value has been reduced by \$5,000

4. **Grand Total, add #1, 2 and 3 above\$31,535**

5. I wish to make the following comparables:

231 Main Street, assessed value _____

(List all comparables and ask for an average reduction. Note: add all items you noted as discrepancies, comparable amounts, etc.)

Example:

True Cash Value\$100,000

Minus Discrepancy/Grand Total.....\$31,535

New True Cash Value\$68,465

One Half = Assessed Value (SEV)\$34,233

NOTE: This sample letter indicates many of the grounds for a reduced assessment. It is very unlikely that an assessment could be reduced by nearly one-third, as illustrated here, but every reduction is important.

Bring a presentation copy for yourself and each of the Board of Review members. Present your review to the Board. Make your points, show photographs, and stay professional.

Tonya Schuitmaker Senate District 2011 Assessors' Contact Information

KALAMAZOO COUNTY

ALAMO TOWNSHIP

Renee Laws
269-382-4182

BRADY TOWNSHIP

Ben Brousseau
269-655-1144

CHARLESTON TOWNSHIP

Diane Gajor
269-665-7805

CLIMAX TOWNSHIP

Diane Gajor
269-746-4103

COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP

Sherry Burd
269-381-2360

COOPER TOWNSHIP

Renee Laws
269-382-0223

KALAMAZOO TOWNSHIP

Ruth Blake
269-381-8080

OSHTEMO TOWNSHIP

Cathy Harrell
269-375-4260

PAVILION TOWNSHIP

Patrick White
269-327-0462

PRAIRIE RONDE TOWNSHIP

Patti Sampley
269-375-7206

RICHLAND TOWNSHIP

Diane Gajor
269-629-4921

ROSS TOWNSHIP

Angela Kirby
269-731-4888

SCHOOLCRAFT TOWNSHIP

Nathan Brousseau
269-649-1276

TEXAS TOWNSHIP

Ted Gruizenga
269-375-1591

WAKESHMA TOWNSHIP

Ben Brousseau
269-655-1144

CITY OF GALESBURG

Patrick Couch
269-665-7000

CITY OF KALAMAZOO

Connie Darling
269-337-8011

CITY OF PARCHMENT

John Frakes
269-349-3785

CITY OF PORTAGE

James Bush
269-329-4433

VAN BUREN COUNTY

ANTWERP TOWNSHIP

Ben Brousseau
269-668-2615

PAW PAW TOWNSHIP

Ted Gruizenga
269-657-4340

